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UNCLAS HARARE 001206

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVELLE, D. TEITELBAUM
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: LITTLE NEW IN MUGABE'S OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

REF: (A) HARARE 1157 (B) HARARE 1067

[11](#). (U) In his remarks opening the fifth and final session of the country's fifth parliament, President Mugabe projected familiar GOZ refrains: good harvests assured adequate food supplies into the next season; the nation's economy was recovering; ongoing land acquisitions would meet the population's demand for land; corruption was being addressed.

Castigating the business sector for its "neocolonial dependence" on Western markets, Mugabe advocated orientation to developing country markets that were "doing better" than the "risky ... declining" West. Stricter regulation and better pricing policies would boost the economy, with parastatals providing the "cutting edge" of renewed productivity. Mugabe pledged to "indigenize" the conservancy/wildlife ranch and mineral sectors, and announced the planned introduction to parliament of a bill establishing a framework for a "more comprehensive and systematic economic empowerment and indigenization program."

[12](#). (U) Warning that NGOs had to work "for the betterment of the country, not against it," the President confirmed GOZ plans to scrap its private voluntary organization law for a new NGO law to "rationalize macro-management of all NGOs." He also urged support for the electoral reform bill that was being drafted consistent with "ongoing consultations on developing regional election norms and standards for SADC." (reftels) The jurisdiction of chiefs in the area of customary law administration would be expanded. To address a host of national challenges, the parliament would pass bills creating new commissions, boards or councils in the areas of health services, education, and youth development. Resources were pledged to refurbish the government's broadcasting facilities and to build a new house for parliament.

[12](#). (SBU) COMMENT: Employing high-brow English and no local dialect, the address was dressed up for elite and diplomatic audiences but did not depart substantively from already charted courses. Mugabe's failure to mention purported sins of the MDC or traditionally identified foreign "enemies" probably reflected his self-imposed distance from them more than any desire not to offend. Wider indigenization efforts and greater regulation of NGOs are long-standing ruling party objectives that have been raised loudly and frequently before with little GOZ follow-through; NGO regulation may get some real attention during this session (to be reported septel). The establishment of new public bodies rather than meaningful policy prescriptions testifies to a dearth of ideas, debate or genuine interest within the ruling party leadership about how to tackle the innumerable fundamental challenges facing the nation.

SULLIVAN